

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05
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R 090927Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8334
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
USICA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3329

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINT, SY
SUBJ: ASSASSINATION RING BORKEN?

1. TISHRIIN EDITOR-IN -CHIEF AMID AL-KHULI TOLD POLOFF
JUNE 8 THAT SYRIANS HAD MADE MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN THEIR
INVESTIGATION OF LONG STRING OF POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED
ASSASSINATIONS OF ALAWITES THROUGHOUT SYRIA. THIS CAME IN
A REPLY TO A QUESTION CONCERNING A LITTLE UNDERSTOOD
COLUMN KHULI HAD WRITTEN SEVERAL MONTHS AGO TYING
TOGETHER ISRAEL INTELLIGENCE, THE IRAQI REGIME, AND THE
COMMUNIST ACTION ORGANIZATION. ACCORDING TO KHULI, THE
ASSASSINATION OF AN ALAWITE INTELLIGENCE WARRANT OFFICER
IN ALEPPO ABOUT THREE WEEKS AGO SHOULD BE THE LAST SUCH
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INCIDENT. HE CLAIMED, WITH ANY GIVING SPECIFICS, THAT SOME
IMPORTANT ARRESTS HAD BEEN MADE AND THAT ONE OF THE INDIVIDULES
HAD DIRECT LINKS TO ISRAEL INTELLIGENCE.

2. KHULI WENT ON TO CLAIM THAT BOTH IRAQ AND ISRAEL WERE
RESPONSIBLE FOR TERRORIST INCIDENTS IN "A TACIT ALLIANCE."
HE FELT THEIR RESPECTIVE INTERESTS IN UNDERMINING THE ASSAD

REGIME HAD CREATED A DEGREE OF IMPLICIT COORDINATION BETWEEN THEM. HE SAID THAT SOME MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS WOULD SOON BE ANNOUNCED BUT ASKED POLOFF NOT TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH ANYONE.

3. SIMILAR CLAIM HAD BEEN MADE BY MID-LEVEL INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVE FOR DAMACUS INTELLIGENCE CHIEF MUHAMMAD NASSIF SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER. HE ASSERTED THAT SYRIA WOULD NOW BE FREE OF ASSASSINATIONS WHICH HAVE PLAGUED THE ASSAD REGIME FOR ALMOST A YEAR AND A HALF, BUT ALSO GAVE NO SPECIFICS.

4. MUHSIN BILAL, PEOPLE'S COUNCIL MEMBER AND AN ALAWITE, SAID JUNE 7, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS NOT REASSURED THAT STRING OF ASSASSINATIONS HAD COME TO AN END. HE WAS PARTICULARLY UPSET AT THQLCZGAMES" THE IRAQIS ARE PLAYING IN SYRIA. HE NOTED THAT IN SPITE OF THE ASSASSINATIONS, THE ALAQITES ARE STILL DIVIDED AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY ARE GETTING THEIR SUPPORT FROM IRAQ.

5. COMMENT: REGARDLESS OF WHO IS ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSASSINATIONS, LEAST EMBARRASSING COURSE FOR ASSAD WILL BE TO BLAME IT ON EXTERNAL ENEMIES. THIS, OF COURSE, DOES NOT PRECLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT EXTERNAL ENEMIES ARE, INDEED, BEHIND SOME OF THE TERRORIST INCIDENTS HERE.
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Message Attributes

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